

Prelude

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Category: Star Wars
Language: English
Status: In-Progress
Published: 2000-06-07 09:00:00
Updated: 2000-06-07 09:00:00
Packaged: 2016-04-27 19:44:32
Rating: K
Chapters: 1
Words: 7,363
Publisher: www.fanfiction.net
Summary: this is my version of what happened before ROTJ.

Prelude

PRELUDE

>

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>
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> This is my version of what happened before ROTJ.I hope you like it.
 spoiler alerts:SOTE and any other stories you can think of!well,nobody is
> perfect!Oh!And if you happen to notice the name 'Aria' mentioned in the story,
 fret not if you are left confused.It's connected to a story I'm currently working on!
>

>
 A slight wind blew through the quiet desert of Tatooine,as night
> scavengers scurried about looking for food.A lone man stood looking at the
 night sky,waiting for the presence of three others.Then he saw it;a single
> spot of light in the distance,coming towards where his ship was located a
 few metres away.The man quickened his pace,feeling elated that the ship's
> occupants had managed to reach unscathed and on time.
 The landing ramp was already lowered down when the man arrived by
> the battered hulk.He stood a little bit away,fingering the lightsaber by his
 side,as he eyed the quiet ship suspiciously.His eyes lit up when he

> recognized the two figures emerging from the ship. A long wookiee growl
 greeted him, and before he could speak, a big hairy paw swoop him up in a
> wookiee hug.
 "Easy, Chewie! You might break my ribs!" Luke Skywalker exclaimed
> jokingly. At the thought of that, the big wookiee quickly dropped the Jedi.
 Luke patted the wookiee and turned to look at the other who had been
> watching the greeting in amusement.
 "Just be thankful he didn't pull your arms out of your sockets!" Leia smiled, looking at the wookiee.
> "Thank the Force you all made it!" Luke said as he hugged her. He looked around, noticing the absence of one droid.
 "I believe we are missing a chatterbox droid" Luke commented, arching
> an eyebrow. Leia laughed. "Chewie decided to lock Threepio up when he began
 telling us the odds of successfully rescuing Han from Jabba the Hutt. I
> couldn't agree with Chewie more"
 Luke laughed too. "Chewie, please. Go get Threepio, we need him
> in this mission" Chewie grumbled something about Threepio only able to make
 things worse than they already were as he clambered up the ramp.
> Leia looked at her surroundings thoughtfully "So, this is Tatooine.
 I've always wanted to know how you managed to survive in this sleazeball
> of a planet." She added hastily "no offense meant"
 "None taken." Luke said truthfully. "The only interesting and
> exciting place in Tatooine is the Beggar's Canyon. I spent most of my
 youth there, hunting for womp rats and racing with Biggs, Deak and
> Windy" he recalled wistfully.
 There was a gleam in his eyes, as he recalled the innocence of
> youth and the call for adventure. Back then, he had been a naive farmboy,
 too young to understand the reality of life and too reckless to comprehend
> the dangers of the universe. But was that a better life than the one he
 had now? Luke looked at his artificial right hand. It still seemed strange
> to him. The medics had claimed that the artificial hand was almost similar
 to that of a real hand, even though it consisted mainly of microchips
> and bolts. Microchips and bolts. Like his father.
 "No, Luke. I AM YOUR FATHER!" Vader had said so forcefully in Bespin.
> "Hey, you awake?"
 Luke broke away from his train of thought. Leia was staring at him in
> a worried manner. The fact was, Leia had almost 'felt' Luke's thoughts, and
 it had saddened and frightened her. Vader still haunted him. Whatever had
> happened between him and Vader in Bespin will forever remain a secret as
 Luke had constantly avoided discussing that subject. Since that fateful
> duel, Luke seemed to shut himself in a cocoon, absorbed solely in his Jedi
 training. There was also a barrier between Luke and Leia, an invisible wall
> that was not there before. For Leia had her own problems too; her duty to
 the alliance had kept her from searching the universe for the cocky smuggler
> who stole her heart. But she was finally able to accomplish something she
 had waited months for; rescuing Han. She looked at Luke. There was a hint

> of wisdom and maturity in his face,a sign that he had grown in power and
 in the Force.But it was the haunted look that happened occasionally
> which frightened her,the same look he was projecting now.

"Yeah.I wonder what's taking Chewie so long"Luke commented,glancing

> at the falcon.The haunted look vanished,leaving behind a calm demeanour
 he meant to project.
> Leia nodded silently."Probably having second thoughts of
 freeing Threepio from the storage compartment"Leia said wilyly.
> "I'd better help.No telling what a wookiee might do"Luke said
 jokingly,as he began to walk to the ship.He stopped when a golden droid
> descended somewhat hurriedly down the ramp.
 "...I am not a nuisance,Chewbacca.But it is suicide I tell you.
> Jabba the Hutt is known to be an impossible slug"Threepio was saying.
 An annoyed looking wookiee followed closely behind,throwing his arms in the
> air in exasperation.
 "It's not a suicide mission ,Threepio"Luke said.
> "Oh, Master Luke.It is so good to see again.You have no idea
 the tortures I endured when Chew.."

> "I understand,Threepio."Luke said in a solemn tone,finding
 it hard not to laugh.
> "But it was uncalled for, Master Luke.Even Artoo would agree
 with me"Threepio said prissily.
> Chewie growled an enquiry.
 "I left Artoo back in Ben Kenobi's homestead.I needed him
> to study the layouts of Jabba's palace which Lando gave him."Luke answered.
 "How is Lando doing?"Leia asked,but not in a friendly tone.Even
> if it had been six months,and he was helping them rescue Han,she still could
 not forgive his betrayal fully,although deep in her heart,she knew he had
> no other choice.
 "Lando's fine,but I think it is best if we all head back
> to Ben's home."Luke scanned the quiet desert,reaching out with the force
 as he did so"A sandstorm is coming in a few hours time and no telling
> if we have any unwanted visitors hanging around here;" he explained.
 Chewie growled his agreement.Together,the four rebels began
> their march to the old Jedi Master's home.

>
 Not far away,in an uncharted part of the universe,several
> Imperial Star Destroyers waited patiently for the next command from
 the Dark Lord.One main Imperial Destroyer,the biggest and deadliest
> among the others,stood out among the rest.Own by the ruthless war lord,
 Darth Vader,it was christened "The Executor";for with this ship,systems
> trembled with fear as none dare oppose the dark lord of Sith.No one,except
 for the small band of rebels waiting to regain their honour after the
> defeat in the Battle of Hoth.
 Darth Vader stood at the helm of the ship,fuming at the lack of
> progress in finding the rebels,espically one rebel in
 particular.....he clenched his fingers together.Someone would die for
> the delay.He strode along the bridge,marveling again at the reverance
 and fear he managed to conjure in the crew on board.

But as he gazed
> upon the youthful faces of some of the officers,his thoughts dwelled on
 one who was as young as they were,but stronger and with the Force as his
> ally.
 The Dark Lord gazed at the stars,reaching out with the force
> as he did so.'where are you,Luke?',but only emptiness greeted him back.
 True,Vader knew that Luke would want to rescue Solo from the vile
> gangster,Jabba the Hutt,for he had posted sentries on the planet to

 notify him immediatedly if Luke should arrive on the planet.However,he
> had wanted to intercept Luke before he could even enter Tatooine,for he
 knew of one other who had wanted him dead.It was after his report to the
> emperor about the duel in Bespin that he had sensed the hunger for his
 son's blood in the emperor.The emperor had known about his 'little' proposal
> to Skywalker if the young Jedi agreed to join forces with him.Vader had
 vehemently denied the truth of the proposal,stating that it was used to
> lure Skywalker to the Dark Side. The emperor had merely nodded to his aide,
 Mara Jade, who stood near by.The stunning but ruthless red-haired woman
> with piercing green eyes had only smiled viciously in return,as if to
 show her scorn to the Skywalker family.
> Vader knew immediately that the emperor would send Jade to kill
 his son,and he began to make plans to intercept Jade from ever entering
> the palace.The emperor,however,had cunningly ordered the dark lord to
 oversee the construction of the new Death Star,which was orbiting the
> forest moon of Endor,a place far from the remote planet of Tatooine.He
 had fumed in anger,and many officers had died for the Dark Lord's temper.
> Refusing to admit defeat,he had secretly ordered his troops to be posted
 on Tatooine,to inform him of the latest news about his son as well as
> posting a large bounty on his son.He reach out with the force again,but
 was interrupted by the sound of footsteps approaching him.Vader whirled
> around to face the admiral,and the imperial officer stood at attention.
 "What is it,admiral?"
> Admiral Piett swallowed a gulp"My Lord,the sentries on Tatooine
 has reported the siting of a ship near Mos Espa that looks remarkably like
> the Millenium Falcon but are still unable to confirm it"
 The Dark Lord fumed with anger "Have the Captain in charged personally

> brought to my ship so that I can question him further about the delay"
 The Admiral swallowed another gulp,knowing what was in store
> for the unfortunate Captain "Yes,my Lord"
 "What of the woman Jade?"
> The admiral stifled his fear"No reports yet,My Lord"
 No,of course there wouldn't be any,for Mara Jade had the power of the Force

> to hide herself from the Dark Lord's nosy troops.He surpress his anger.So,
 the emperor had planned well to eliminate his son,and he had been unable

> to do anything about it.His thoughts were interrupted when another officer
 strode up to him.
> "My Lord,the emperor commands you to make contact with him"
 Vader shoved the young officer away,walking quickly to the communications
> room.Bowing in fear and respect,Vader awaited the appearance of his master.
 "What is thy bidding,my master?"
> A hologram of the emperor materialized in front of the dark lord.
 "Tell me the progress of your journey,my friend"
> "We will reach the Death Star within two standard days,my master"
 " Give me a full report of the operations proceeding on the Death
> Star the moment you reach there"the emperor ordered.
 "Yes,my master"
> An evil smile seemed to peer underneath the hood.
 "Good....good...,but why is it that I sense your desire to leave
> your duty on the Death Star?"
 Vader gritted his teeth.As always, the emperor knew what he was thinking.
> "There is nothing I can do there,and I would like to continue
 my search for young Skywalker"
> The hologram seemed to fizzled slightly.
 "Do you wish to defy me?"the emperor demanded.
> Vader hesitated"No....my master"
 There was a tense silence as the emperor considered his apprentice's answer.
> "Skywalker is not of your concern for now.Your presence is greatly
 needed on the Death Star.I will come in a week's time to access the progress
> made on the Death Star"Again the hologram fizzled slightly
 "Do not defy my orders,Lord Vader"with that,the hologram dissolved.
> "Yes,my master"Vader bowed his head,but anger instead of fear
 filled his heart.
>
 It was nearing sunrise when the five rebels began discussing

> ways to infiltrate Jabba's palace.Luke's thoughts were grim as he studied the miniature palace Artoo was projecting.Jabba's palace resembled that of a
 monastery for it was once controlled by monks.
> "Jabba's palace is too well guarded."Leia commented."We must
 be able to sneak into the palace without revealing ourselves."she added.
> Chewie growled a suggestion.
 Threepio spoke up,as Luke and Leia was still unable to
> understand Chewie's language fully."Chewbacca suggest that we might be able
 to enter the palace undetected if we all post as bounty hunters or smugglers"
> Luke nodded thoughtfully."However,we must also consider the
 amount of security posted at the main hallway."
> "And that is the only entrance to Jabba's palace.Even the sewers
 are too clogged up and small to enter." Leia pointed out.
> Chewie growled again.
 "He believes that going in would not be a problem.The only
> matter is coming out of the palace with Captain Solo alive.Frankly
 Master Luke,I do agree with Chewbacca"Threepio said.
> Luke pondered for a moment."Perhaps we should send the
 droids first.That way,Artoo can give us the signal to enter Jabba's
> palace at the right moment"
 "I beg your pardon,Master Luke,but I do not believe that
> is a wise idea"Threepio spoke up hurriedly.
 Artoo twittered thoughtfully to himself.
> "Threepio's right"Leia said."They might be recognised by
 the

bounty hunters there.And they would be disintegrated by the time we

> reach the palace"
 "Did you say ,disintegrated?"Threepio wailed.

> "It will work.Besides,I have another idea that involves Artoo
 if our plan fails"Luke said.

> "So,we have a Plan B already?"Leia asked in an amused tone.

Chewie growled a question,wondering if Luke was thinking of

> using his hocus-pocus to save Han.Apparently Han had gotten Chewie to
 disbelief in the force too.

> "Yes,Chewie.And it's not hocus-pocus ,mind you."Luke said
 wryly.Luke turned to look at Leia and Chewie,his penetrating blue eyes

> seeking their trust in his power of the Force."Please,believe me.I will
 use the Force wisely to save Han"Luke looked towards Leia"Leia,remember

> what happened in Aria?"
 Leia remebered only to clearly.Luke had displayed such power

> that it had reminded her of the Dark Lord.It had frightened her,but she
 knew that his power in the force had saved them all back then.

> She nodded silently.
 Chewie,sensing a new awareness in Luke,also nodded in agreement.

> All that mattered to him was that they would be able to save his cub.
 Luke smiled in gratitude."Thank you.It means a lot to me to

> have your trust"
 Artoo tooted a suggestion.

> "Uh...Master Luke,Mistress Leia,.Artoo suggest that Princess
 Leia and the wookie should post as bounty hunters and enter the palace after

> we have done so."Threepio said.
 The wookie then barked a suggestion.

> "Chewie suggest that he post as a bounty hunter while Princess Leia
 will act as his bounty"Threepio said.

> "I will not be the bounty,Chewie."Leia said,speaking in a
 princess-like tone."How am I able to free Han from the carbonite if I am all

> chained up?Besides,it is harder to conceal yourself and you will be recognized"
 Chewie roared in disapproval,saying that it should be his duty to

> free Han from the carbonite.
 "Leia's right,Chewie.We are all high in the most wanted list,

> and Leia can conceal herself by wearing a bounty hunter costume"Luke said.
 The wookie clearly wanted to strangle the young Jedi.He bared

> his fangs in disapproval.
 "I must advise you ,Master Luke.It isn't wise to upset a

> wookie"Threepio spoke up.
 Luke ignored the droid."Besides,if Leia managed to free Han,they would

> probably throw him into your cell,and you would be able to attend to
 Han's medical needs" Luke pointed out.

> There was a silence as Chewie pondered thoughtfully.Finally,
 he growled in agreement.

> "Is the medical pack safe with Lando?"Leia asked .She was clearly
 unafraid of the wookie's disagreement.

> "He says it is securely taped to his chest and that Jabba's
 minions had yet to detect it"Luke replied.He too was undisturbed by

> the wookie's anger.Chewie growled silently to himself,wondering if he had lost
 his menacing touch.

> "Alright.If we are captured..... "Leia said.
 "I will enter the palace"Luke said.

> Leia nodded in agreement,wondering why she was not bothered that Luke would
 be the last to enter the palace.Perhaps it was the commanding tone in his

> voice which silenced her doubts.Apparently ,Chewie came to the same conclusion,
 and growled another suggestion.

> "Perhaps you wouldn't have to."Leia said"After I have freed Han,
 we could escape the palace by nightfall.There's only six of us,so it wouldn't

> be too hard."Chewie whuffled his agreement,his eyes filled with anticipation
 at the thought of ripping the arms of the guards and bounty hunters,especially

> Boba Fett's,in particular.
 Luke shook his head "It won't be easy.According to Lando,no one

> has ever escaped the palace in one piece.Besides ,there's too many guards.And
 IF you are all caught,Jabba has many gruesome ways of killing his prisoners,if

> what Lando say is true"
 Leia looked defiantly at him"We'll do fine"

> Luke gazed into the princess eyes and saw the hurt mulling in
 there.There was a recklessness about her now for he knew that all she cared

> about was rescuing Han from Jabba.
 "Leia,you know that I want to rescue Han as much as you do,but

> you must consider how Han would be like after the decarboniteization.Remember
 what the medics say..."

> "I remember"Leia snapped at him.She took a deep breath
 "I'm sorry,Luke.....is just that.....well,I've been waiting for

> so long now just to free Han"Luke put a reassuring hand on Leia while
 Chewie whuffled softly.Leia smiled at them"Well,we had better continue

> discussing our plan,or all this would be for nothing...so,Luke,about the
 bounty hunter scam....."

> Finally,after several heated discussions,the princess stood
 up,stretching her arms and legs."Okay,It's settled then.I'm starving.Let's

> visit Mos Espa and see if we can find something to eat while looking for a
 bounty hunter costume there.I heard it's a place full of scum and violence

> like Mos Eisley"she commented.
 Chewie rolled his eyes,muttering "princess" sarcastically under

> his breath while Luke stood up,glad that they were all able to agree on the
 plan.

> "Providing that I choose my own costume"Leia added mischeviously.

>
 By the time the Luke ,Leia and Chewie arrived at Mos Espa,the

> town was full of hustle and bustle as beings from all over the universe went
 about their own business,ranging from smugglers to bounty hunters,and

> the inhabitants of the town itself.Luke drew his cloak closer around him,
 making sure he would not be recognized.He glanced about him,reaching out

> with the force to check for any suspicious minds.
 "Are you sure it was wise to leave the droids alone back there?"

> Leia asked,her sound muffled by the cloth she wore around her face.
 "They'll be fine.There are very few droid scavengers in the

> morning"Luke said.
 "I was thinking of the empire"Leia

said,gesturing her hand

> at a few stormtroopers who stood near by.
 "Don't worry.Ben's home is thoroughly concealed."Luke said

> softly,providing no more information.
 Leia nodded,glancing at the wookie as she did so.Chewie had

> vehemently refused to wear any clothes as he commented that he would
 look ridiculous in it.After much roaring and shouting,he finally agreed to

> put on a pair of speacial goggles which would not only helped conceal his
 identity,even if a bit,but to protect his sensitive eyes from the whirling

> sand.
 The three of them walked to the quieter part of the town,where

> most of the poor inhabitants stayed.Suddenly,they heard a woman's
 shriek as they rounded a corner.They ran to the source of the noise to

> find a middle-aged woman in the grasp of a fully costumed being.The woman
 turned her head and saw them,shouting for help as she did so.The being let

> her go,but took out his blaster instead,and said something unintelligible
 to the woman.He then pointed his blaster to the newcomers,clearly intending

> to wipe them out.
 Luke didn't hesitate.He reached out with the force and the

> blaster came flying towards him.The being shouted in disbelief and did
 not noticed the wookie striding towards him.With one blow,the wookie

> knocked the being unconscious.
 "I hope you didn't kill him"Leia commented as she checked for

> a pulse.
 Chewie growled in denial ,scanning the area for any unwanted

> bystanders.
 Luke strode towards the woman,sensing the woman's fear and

> gratitude that they had saved her.
 "It's all right"Luke said in a calm,serene tone Leia had never

> heard him use before."We aren't your enemies."he said soothingly,as he
 offered a hand.

> The woman looked up fearfully at first,but then she stood
 up,waving away Luke's hand."No need for that.I'm capable of standing up

> by myself.Thank you ,young man.Neat trick you pulled just now.You Jedi's
 are really handy at doing that kind of trick."She commented,gesturing to

> the lightsabre at his belt.
 "Well,I..."Luke said,feeling like a farmboy again.

> "And thanks to you too"the woman said to Chewie,clearly
 unafraid of being near a wookie"Don't see much wookie around here,if

> you know what I mean"she added,elbowing Leia.
 Chewie growled in surprise,looking at Luke and Leia as

> he did so.Leia shrugged in return.
 "What happened?"Leia asked,gesturing to the fallen being.

> "Oh,that's Boussh,the bounty hunter"the woman said"I used
 to work with his father when I was a young woman like you."

> "You're a bounty hunter?"Luke asked incredulously.
 "Good heavens,no.I was just an average navigator aboard a

> frieghter,but I suggest that you all better come in doors.I have many
 nosy neighbours around here,and outlanders like you sure don't want to

> attract attention"she said,gesturing for them to follow her.

Chewie growled at the being on the floor.
> "Just leave him to the scavengers"the woman said impatiently.

The wookie shrugged and joined them.The woman stopped in her
> tracks.
 "On second thoughts,bring him in.I told his father I
would
> take care of him"she said to the wookie.
 Chewie growled in
annoyance and heaved Boussh over his
> shoulders.The woman gestured them into her home which was only a
few
 metres away.It was comfortably furnished considering that it
was situated
> in a poor settement.
 "Please,make yourself at home."she
said,walking towards the
> kitchen"Kinuf,I brought some nice people home.Make them feel
comfortable"she
 yelled to the kitchen.
> "Not again,Tania.Did Boussh bother you again?"a man's voice

said from the kitchen.
> "Ah,never mind that."Tania said.She looked at them with a

matrons eye"You all must be hungry.I'll cook up something nice for
you"with
> that,she strode towards the kitchen.
 Chewie sniffed the air
suspiciously,growling his uneasement.
> "I agree ,Chewie.This seems far too weird"Leia said,glancing at

 her surroundings."What about you,Luke?"Leia asked.
> "I don't sense any deceit here,and.....there is something

very familiar about this house"Luke replied thoughtfully.Leia had
> also felt the same familiarity in the house,as if someone she knew
had once
 lived here.
> A dark ,heavysset man,about the same age as Tania, came out

from the kitchen,an apron sling over his waist.
> "Hello and welcome to ol' Kinuf's house.Tania told me you

saved her life.I would like to show my gratitude by cooking something
special
> for you"he said,rubbing his palms together.
 "I think we should
be going.."Leia said,standing up.Chewie
> growled in agreement.
 "now,young lady.Sit down and don't be
afraid of old Kinuf."
> Tania commented,pointing a scrawny finger at Leia.
 Luke touch
Leia's arm lightly"It'll be all right,Leia.
> Chewie,sit down"
 "There now,follow the Jedi's judgement."Tania
said,glancing
> appreciatively at Luke."If I remember correctly,Jedis can sense any

 deceit,right?"
> Luke nodded,grinning as he did so.
 "A Jedi did you say
,Tania?"Kinuf cried,taking out his
> glasses as he did so,adjusting them so as to get a better look at
Luke.
 "Why,I haven't seen any Jedi since old Ben Kenobi visited
us a few
> years ago."
 Leia glanced in shock at the old man,and was
further
> surprised when Luke seemed unperturbed."Luke,what's going on?"

"I remember now."Luke said,gesturing at the old man
> and woman"Ben told me during our trip to the Death Star that he had
two
 loyal friends who always helped him when he was in
trouble.He only spoke
> of you once"Luke added,looking at the kindly people"but he warned
me
 that Kinuf and Titania Melloway are not to be judged by their
appearances."
> "Old Ben called us his loyal friends?Well,I never!"Kinuf

exclaimed happily.
> "And he only spoke about us just once,after all we did
 for

him!"Tania sighed.She turned to look at Luke"Well,what was your
> relationship with Ben,young man?"she demanded.
 "He was my
mentor."Luke replied simply,but there was a
> proud tone in his voice.
 "Ah"Tania remembered wistfully"He was
a great Jedi
> master,that he was.I.....wait a second,you must be the famous Luke
Skywalker!"
 This time,Luke looked shocked."I...."
> "Oh,I seemed to have frightened you.Don't worry,your
 secret's
safe with old Kinuf and me"Tania said,patting his hand.
> Leia was wondering what kind of secret she was referring
 to
when the woman turned to look at Leia"And I presume you are the
famous
> rebel princess,Leia Organa?"Tania asked,arching an eyebrow.

Leia looked at Luke in surprise'Who were these people?'
> "Oh,we always catch up with the latest news about the

rebellion.It's been too boring in Tatooine lately"Kinuf explained.

> "But how....."Leia asked doubtfully.
 "We have ways,dear"Tania
answered,a mischevious gleam
> in her eyes.
 Chewie growled impatiently when his nose detected
a sweet
> aroma coming from the kitchen.
 "Well,well,well.Chewbacca here
seems hungry.What say we
> all have some breakfast now,hmmm?"Tania said,gesturing to the
kitchen,
 ignoring the look of surprise on the wookie's face.The
three of them
> could only nod their heads.

>

>
 It was a fairly decent meal and it reminded Luke of his last
meal with
> his aunt and uncle.Using primitive but usable plastic spoon and
bowls,the
 three rebels ate their food under the watchful eyes of
Kinuf and Tania.
> "Well,what brings you here,eh?"Tania asked.
 "We have some
personal business to attend to"Luke replied.
> "Any way me and ol' Kinuf here can help?"Tania asked hopefully.

Chewie looked at Luke and Leia and growled menacingly.
> "um...it's very dangerous.."Leia began.
 Tania glanced
disaprovingly at the wookie"Now,see here wookie.Me and
> Kinuf here ain't just some bag of bones waiting to be tossed
around.And
 don't you scare this young lassy here.It ain't your
say,wookie"
> Chewie growled in surprise,then he began chuckling
 to himself.

> "There,the wookie seems satisfied!"Tiana said truimpantly.
 She
noticed that Luke was glancing around,frowning as he did so.
> "Why,young Luke,does this house seem mighty familiar
 to
you?"Tania asked.Kinuf was also looking at Luke expectingly.
> "Yes.why is that so?"Luke asked curiously.
 "Is his Jedi
sense,Kinuf,it sure is"Tania said,smiling at
> her husband.
 "What is it?"Luke asked tensely.
> "Why,young Luke.I believe your old grandma used to
 live
here"Tania said.
> Luke was really surprised"my grandma?!"
 "I still remember
her"Kinuf said wistfully"Shmi Skywalker
> was a really kind woman"
 Leia looked questioningly at Luke.

> His face was filled with an eagerness he had never felt for a long
time now.
 "I never knew I had a grandma who lived in Mos Espa.

> Ben never told...."
 Tania looked at him kindly"Old Ben had a lot of secrets,eh?Shmi passed
> away not long after her....well,she was a strong woman,but even her

 health failed her"she added sadly.
> "How did she die?"Luke asked silently.
 "I just told you!Well, once you've finished your
> food,laddie,I'll show you around.Sure glad that the grandson of Shmi
 finally managed to visit our humble home here"Tania said,as she gathered
> the plates around her.
 "How did you managed to acquire this place?"Leia asked
> Kinuf supplied the answer"Her son,Anakin,Luke's father,was so sad by his
 mother's death that he didn't really care about the house.So,we took it"
> Luke sat down again,unable to comprehend all that
 he was hearing.Chewie growled comfotingly at Luke while Leia placed a
> reassuring hand on his shoulder.
 Tania gave Luke a quick look.
"Your father was
> a fine lad.We used to play together when we were children,ya' know"
 It was quite hard for Luke to picture the dark lord
> as a child,but it did gave Luke an insight to Vader's humanity.And it was
 apparent that Tania and Kinuf did not know that Anakin Skywalker was now
> known as DARTH Vader.
 "You knew of my father's..... death?"Luke

> asked hesitantly.
 Tania looked surprised"Why,of course,laddie.When old Ben
> returned ,he told us that Anakin had died.It was a real shock to us,and
 we were further surprised to learn that he had married,let alone had a son."
> Kinuf looked at Luke meaningfully"We offered to
 raise you,Luke,but Ben wouldn't have it.He didn't tell us who would be
> your guardians,but we later found out it was some guy name Owen and his
 wife ,Beru"
> Luke only shooked his head,while Leia wondered
 how Luke would have been if he had been raised by them.Leia noticed that
> Boussh still lay slumped in one corner.
 "What about him?"she asked Tania,pointing at Boussh.
> "Him?"Tania asked questioningly.She peered at Leia,
 followed her gesture"Oh him!Don't mind him,dear.He'll be up and about in
> no time,grumbling for attention and the likes of that"she laughed"But
 you'll prefer him that way,believe me"she added,gesturing at the sleeping form.
> "So,what's this personal business you're all so secretive about,eh?"Tania asked,changing the subject.
 "We're here to rescue a friend of ours"Leia replied.
> "Not from the empire I believe?"Kinuf asked.
 "Nah,it ain't the empire,not in Tatooine"Tania said
> thoughtfully.She turned to look at Luke,her brown eyes twinkling"my best bet
 is that the heroes of the rebellion are going against something
> big.....say,Jabba?"
 Luke grinned broadly,apparently unafraid that
> she had discovered their purpose"That's a good guess,Tania"
 "Then you'll definately need our help!"Tania said
> jubilantly.Kinuf nodded his head in approval.Chewie still wuffled his
 disapproval,despite Tania's reprimanding during breakfast.Leia knew it was
> no use arguing with Tania,and only nodded her head in agreement.She noticed
 that Luke aslo had the same thought,for he followed her

action. But he turned
> to look at Leia, glancing mischievously as he did so, and she could have sworn
 she heard him saying "for now" in her head. She blinked her eyes in confusion,
> but her thoughts were interrupted when Tania clasped her hand.
 "I believe that's settled!" Tania grinned happily. She
> turned to Luke. "Well, I believe it's time to show you around, Luke. After that, we
 can discuss ways on how we would be able to help you in your mission!"
>

>

> It was some time later that Tania took Luke on a tour around
 the house, pointing out necessary stuff. She took out a small holopad, glancing
> at Luke as she did so. "I found this while clearing up the house a few months
 ago. I think you might want to have a look at it" She thumbed a switch, and a
> still hologram of two figures emerged. Luke saw a quiet-looking woman who had
 a sad smile on her lips staring back at him, while her hands were placed firmly
> but affectionally on a sandy-haired little boy who, much to Luke's amazement,
 looked almost like Luke did when he was young. Tania noticed his unwavering
> gaze, and nodded at the hologram. "That's Shmi and Anakin, although you've probably
 figured that out by now." She glanced away, her thoughts focusing on a different
> lifetime. "We were all slaves, you know, sold to the Hutts and all." Noticing Luke's
 startled gaze, she added hastily "but we were all freed later, thanks to your
> father. He was the first to be freed, by a... Jedi Knight, I believe, and Anakin
 later came back to free us." She arched an eyebrow at him. "Your father was a
> powerful Jedi, believe me"
 "Tania!" Kinuf called out.
> "Gotta go. Here" she placed the holopad in his hands. "I believe
 you might like to have this. Coming!" she yelled back.
> "Well, in that room over there, is where your father used to
 sleep. You might want to take a look" she said as she walked to the living room.
> Luke stepped into the room, which was now a storage room.
 Gripping the holopad protectively, he ran his fingers along the wall, drawing
> in the Force as he began to 'feel' the presence of one who had lived there.
 Master Yoda had once said that it was possible to 'feel' the occupant of a
> room by touching his things. Although it had been a long time ago, Luke could
 'feel' a sense of urgency and sadness left by the previous occupant. There
> was something more, but Luke could not grasp it, as he did not have enough
 power or time. A shuffling noise from the living room broke his concentration.
> Luke rushed out, lightsaber in hand, only to find Chewie placing a firm grip
 on Boush who had just awoken.
> ".....now, wookie" Tania was saying "No need to be so rough on
 poor Boush here"
> Luke walked towards them, "Will he be alright?" he asked.
 Tania looked up at Luke, "Nothing to it, young Luke. Boush
> here is awakening from his deep slumber which the wookie sent him to"
 "Quit your snivelling, old woman, and help me off this
> creature" Boush said in a heavily accented basic, but mechanical voice.
 "Well, Boush, there are two important things you must

> always remember ever since your father left you in my care. One, I'm in
 charge here, and two, I am NOT a snivelling old woman!" Tania replied with force.

> Leia came out of the kitchen, with Kinuf close by.
 "What's going on?"

> "Say what you want, old woman, but you still need help from
 outsiders, I see," Boussh said, glancing at Leia, Luke and Chewie as he did so.

> Tania crossed her arms over her chest, gave a loud sigh and
 promptly snatched his helmet away from him. Boussh looked vulnerable without

> his gruesome mask, a pitiful looking creature with small pinkish eyes which
 blinked repeatedly to keep out the sudden glare of bright lights.

> "'Enough of this! You know I can't breathe properly without my
 helmet and my armour'" Boussh said in Ubese, his native language.

> "'Respect your seniors, Boussh! You would not have been alive
 if it weren't for us!" Tania replied back in Ubese.

> Leia suddenly spoke up in Ubese "'Your guardian is a fine
 woman, Boussh, and I suggest you had better follow her orders'"

> All turned to look at her in surprise, much to Leia's discomfort
 "I speak a little Ubese" she explained sheepishly.

> "I don't need any advice from outsiders who don't mean well" Boussh
 said in basic.

> "They don't mean any harm....." Kinuf began.
 Tania silenced him with a look.

> "Kinuf's right" Leia said "We do not mean any harm. As it is, we've
 spend too much of our time here" Leia stood up.

> Boussh was looking at Leia in a queer way, and it made her
 nervous. "Ah, I know you." his eyes began to gleam evilly "A large bounty has

> been placed on the the rebel's princess..." he turned to look at Luke and
 Chewie "as well as her friends. And it had been informed that Luke Skywalker

> would be on Tatooine to rescue that worthless Han Solo from Jab... "abruptly
 he gurgled, silenced by a blaster shot .

> Luke whirled to find Tania holding Boussh blaster in
 her hands "Tania...."

> Tania looked at him with weary eyes "Don't fret, Jedi. I set
 the weapon for stun" she looked at the fallen Ubese, "he knew too much,

> and my guesses is you people don't have much time if what" she gestured
 her head at Boussh "he said was true"

> Leia was surprised by the woman's composure, and even Kinuf
 looked serious. She spoke up "Then we must leave immediately. Chewie, signal

> Threepio and tell them that we're on our way" the wookiee nodded, and began
 growling into the comlink.

> "Thanks for offering to help us" Luke said "...but we don't want to
 trouble you both any longer"

> Tania shook her head adamantly "We all do the best we can, young
 Luke." she said, holstering the blaster "Say... don't you need disguises if you

> need to enter Jabba's palace undetected? There will be more bounty hunters
 looking for you lot out there, you know" she gestured to the window.

> "Yes, as it happens, I need to disguise myself as a bounty
 hunter... what is it?" Leia asked, noticing that both Tania and Kinuf were

> looking at Boussh. And from the way they were looking at him, Leia almost
 felt pity for Boussh.

> Tania glanced at Luke and Leia "I have an idea!"

>

> "Goodbye, and say hi to Jabba for me!" Tania called out, waving her
right
 arm as she did so.
> The three rebels waved back, but were soon swallowed by the
crowd.
 "Charming couple" Leia said .
> "They meant well, you know" Luke said, glancing around to make
sure
 there were no suspicious glances. He looked at the oversized
bag Leia was
> carrying. "I wonder how's Boussh feeling right now"
 Leia glanced
at him "Probably feeling shaky and cold all over. I doubt
> he would dare disobey Tania and Kitscher in the future." Chewie
guffwed at
 that, imagining the sly bounty hunter shivering under
Tania's gaze.
> Luke glance warily around him, noticing the sudden increase of

stormtroopers. He drew his hood closer to his face and reach out with
the
> force to sense for any threat. He was drawing his attention to a
squadron
 of stormtroopers when he suddenly 'felt' the presense
of another 'force-user'.
> And to add to his astonishment, the other 'presence' was also
reaching out
 with the force , as if searching for someone. Taking
a deep breath, Luke cleared
> his mind, shielding his power from whoever- it- was. He dared not
probe the
 other's mind, even though he was bursting with
curiosity, for fear of
> revealing himself. Luke rather suspected that the 'force -user' was
looking
 for them. He glanced casually aroud, but saw no suspicious
glances or even
> a hint of malice from anyone near them.
 Leia, noticing the
sudden change in Luke's demeanour,
> asked "What's wrong , Luke?"
 "Nothing" he said, for he did not want
to draw attention, "but we had
> better hurry." Luke added, indicating the stormtroopers.
 Both
Leia and the wookiee only nodded their heads, but question Luke no
further
> as the three rebels quietly continued their journey.

> Mara Jade sipped her drink silently , a mixture of Afra wine and
T'fux, as
 she reached out with the force to search the presence
of Skywalker and
> the other rebels. So far, she had not been able to sense his presense

 anywhere on Tatooine yet. Besides, the bunch of worthless
stormtroppers
> Vader had sent to keep post on Tatooine had only distracted her
further.
 She looked around, noticing the array of creatures
standing or sitting
> here and there in what had to be the most boring cantina she had
ever
 been. She sipped her drink again, noticing a few of Jabba's
henchmen as
> she did so. She used the force to penetrate their minds, but what she

 found revealed nothing new. Skywalker have not appeared to Jabba
yet, that
> was evident. She had rather hope to kill him without having to enter

 Jabba's palace, but it seemed that there were no other choices.

> Ignoring a brawl between two very drunk creatures, she reach out

 with the force again.....and suddenly 'felt' his presense. She
opened
> herself fully to the force, reaching out to the other
presence, trying
 to locate his position.....when abruptly, the

connection broke.

> She reach out with the force again but was suddenly distracted
 when one of the drunken creatures crashed into her table.Mara swore,whipping

> out her blaster as she did so.The creature smiled inhumanly to her,a smile
 which turned to stark terror when Mara coolly pulled two blaster shots at

> him.The creature collasped,and the other drunken creature who had been
 ready to punch him,walk hastily away from her.

> Mara looked at the pitiful creature at her feet,ignoring the curious
 look from other patrons.

> "You're lucky my blaster was set for stun"she told the sleeping
 creature.Holstering her blaster,she silently made her way out of the

> cantina.

> "Have you located his presence yet?"the emperor asked her.
 Mara stared at the yellowish eyes of her master"Yes,but it was too brief

> for me to know where he is hiding"
 Her master pursed his lips"And why is that?"

> "He shielded himself before I could get a hold on him"
 "Ah,so he has grown in power,that he even knows when and how to

> shield his power from one so skillfully trained"the emperor cackled.
 "He won't be so powerful after I have defeated him"Mara retorted

> The emperor frowned at this"Never underestimate an opponent's power"
 "Yes, my master.I believe then,that now is the time to enter

> Jabba's palace?"she aksed.
 The emperor thought for a while"Yes"he finally said"Skywalker will save his friend.....and.....do NOT fail me,Mara Jade"

> Mara bowed her head in reverance"I won't,for I have never failed
 you before"

> The emperor's presence vanished,and Mara began forming a plan to fulfil
 her master's command;the death of Luke Skywalker.

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file.